

# ACQUISITION EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

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## Introduction

The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) Policy on Continuous Learning directs that civilian and military acquisition professionals participate in learning activities that augment the minimum standards required for certification in certain acquisition career fields (ACFs). The Director for Acquisition Career Management (DACM) also places strong emphasis on continuous development through quality education, leadership training, and career-broadening opportunities to enhance technical and functional competencies. This article describes some of the key acquisition education, training, and experience opportunities available to acquisition workforce members to enhance their professional development. Many of these opportunities are also outlined in the *Acquisition Education, Training and Experience (AETE) Catalog*.

## Civilian Selection Process

An AETE Board meets biannually to consider eligible Army Acquisition and Technology Workforce (A&TWF) members for various education, training, and experience opportunities. Specifically, the board reviews and approves civilian applications for the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), the School of Choice Program, leadership-training courses offered by numerous educational institutions, and other experiential and developmental opportunities. Civilians must apply to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASA(M&RA)) to be considered for selection to the Senior Service College (SSC) Fellowship Program, which is offered at both the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF) and the University of Texas at Austin.

The Army War College and the National War College are also available as civilian SSC options. A selection

board convened by the ASA(M&RA) reviews civilian applications for these opportunities (see Section VII of the AETE Catalog).

## Military Selection Process

Military officers pursuing full-time educational programs are governed by AR 621-1, *Training of Military Personnel at Civilian Institutions*. Application and selection procedures for Acquisition Corps officers are available online at <http://www-perscom.army.mil/Opfam51/ambmain.htm>.

Based on their individual year group, military officers are automatically considered for SSC options by a Department of the Army board.

## AETE Catalog

The AETE Catalog describes many of the opportunities needed to meet the standards established by the Policy on Continuous Learning and categorizes learning activities based on those outlined in the policy. For educational opportunities in the AETE Catalog, acquisition workforce members must pursue disciplines that underpin the acquisition functions as described in the Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5000.52-M, *Acquisition Career Development Program*. The AETE Catalog is available online at <http://dacm.rdaisa.army.mil/careerdevelopment>.

## Educational Opportunities

The Educational/Academic section of the AETE Catalog includes degree-producing programs at institutions of higher education. Listed in this section are several career development opportunities that enable A&TWF members to earn a bachelor's or master's degree or to obtain the 12 or 24 semester hours in business disciplines required for membership in the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC). Details of these educational/academic opportunities follow.

**Senior Service College.** The SSC Program offers an opportunity for civilian and military members of the AAC to gain advanced training and experience specifically geared to leadership positions.

- The ICAF, located at Fort McNair in Washington, DC, was designed by the USD(AT&L) to present the Senior Acquisition Management Course (PMT 401) as part of the Defense Acquisition University (DAU). Completion of the course fulfills the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) educational requirement for Senior Executive Service status.

- The University of Texas SSC Fellowship Program, managed by the University of Texas Center for Strategic Analysis in Austin, TX, is a resident program affiliated with the Army War College. This is a structured program with trilateral focus on the relationships among national security policy and process, emerging critical technologies, and the industrial base. Fellows are given the opportunity to complete a graduate degree while attending the program.

**Naval Postgraduate School.** Located in Monterey, CA, NPS is an academic institution that emphasizes study and research programs relevant to the interests of the Navy and other DOD agencies. Presently, there are four graduate degree programs available to members of the A&TWF.

- The Acquisition and Contract Management (815) Program leads to an M.S. degree in management. The curriculum is designed to provide the skills necessary to manage the field contracting, system acquisition, and contracting administration process. This program is in residence at NPS.

- The Systems Acquisition Management (816) Program also leads to an M.S. degree in management. The curriculum is designed to provide the skills necessary to manage the systems acquisition process.

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- Master of Science in Contract Management (MSCM 835).
- Master of Science in Program Management (MSPM 836).

The latter two programs are regional distance learning programs. For the first eight quarters, classes are held onsite during both duty and non-duty hours through a video teleconferencing link to an NPS classroom in Monterey. The last quarter of the degree program is completed through an accelerated 8-week residence session at NPS.

**School Of Choice Program.** This program provides AAC and Corps Eligible (CE) members an opportunity to complete a graduate degree during duty hours. It also provides an opportunity for A&TWF members to complete an undergraduate degree. Applications for the School of Choice Program must be submitted to the AETE Board for approval.

**Acquisition Tuition Assistance Program (ATAP).** This program is available for civilian A&TWF members who wish to complete a baccalaureate degree or fulfill the business-hour requirement cited in Public Law 101-510, *National Defense Authorization Act for FY91, Title XII Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act*, dated Nov. 5, 1990. ATAP may be used to complete either 24 semester credit hours (or equivalent) from among the following disciplines: accounting, business finance, law contracts, quantitative methods, and organization and management; or 24 semester credit hours (or equivalent) in the member's career field and 12 semester hours in the disciplines cited above.

ATAP is also available for civilian AAC and CE members interested in pursuing graduate study in a business, scientific, or technical specialty as cited in Public Law 101-510 and outlined in DoD Directive 5000.52-M. Participants take classes during nonduty hours, unless the organization approves class attendance during duty hours. ATAP applications may be submitted to the National Capital Region Customer Support Office.

Both the School of Choice Program and ATAP are restricted to accredited colleges and universities within the applicant's local commuting area offering degree programs in disciplines that

underpin the acquisition functions described in DoD 5000.52-M.

## Training Opportunities

The Training Opportunities section of the AETE Catalog addresses functional/technical training and leadership training.

**Functional/Technical.** This training is designed to assist A&TWF members in completing mandatory certification training, participating in cross training specific to one ACF to become familiar with or certified in multiple ACFs, or staying current in their career functional areas. This training is depicted on the first level of the Acquisition Career Development Plan (ACDP) Development Model (described later in this article) and is provided primarily by the DAU.

The DAU is a consortium of DOD education and training institutions that provides mandatory, assignment-specific courses for A&TWF members serving in the 11 ACFs. (Refer to article on DAU Internet/hybrid courses on Page 57.)

**Leadership Training** After A&TWF members have established a firm functional/technical base, training should focus on enabling workforce members to have continuous exposure to leadership skills throughout their careers. Leadership training supports this philosophy by providing numerous Acquisition Corps-funded courses. The training in the AETE Board-selected leadership and executive management seminars focuses on building the OPM competencies essential to career progression and broadening.

## Developmental Opportunities

The training opportunities listed in the Experiential and Developmental Opportunities section of the AETE Catalog continue to be a significant component in the A&TWF member's career path. The most prestigious developmental opportunity is the Competitive Development Group (CDG) Program, which allows high-potential professionals to participate in a 3-year program of specialized cross-functional training and advanced developmental assignments in various acquisition fields. (Refer to CDG article on Page 29.)

Other opportunities that provide civilians career-broadening experience within a private-industry environment

are the Training with Industry Program and the Master of Science/Industry Work Study (MS/IWS) Program at the University of Texas at Austin. The MS/IWS Program combines completion of a master's degree with a part-time internship with industry.

In addition to developmental assignments, the AAC affords professionals the opportunity to participate in a tour of duty at locations such as the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA, and in Korea. These operational experiences provide A&TWF members the opportunity to gain first-hand experience and insight on how the Army fights and knowledge about the Army's Table of Organization and Equipment.

## ACDP

The AAC developed the ACDP to provide the acquisition workforce with a framework for conducting career planning. The ACDP provides the information and tools necessary to assist A&TWF members in developing their individual career plans. With the assistance of an Acquisition Career Manager, acquisition career professionals can ensure that achievements outlined in the Acquisition Career Record Brief and opportunities addressed in the Individual Development Plan support the methodology outlined in the ACDP.

## Conclusion

A highly trained workforce is a prerequisite to providing the best possible support to our warfighters and for success in today's ever-changing competitive business environment. As such, the AAC provides quality education, training, and career-broadening opportunities to develop a workforce of leaders committed to supporting our soldiers now and in the future.

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